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Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 067496
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:LE MOPS

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: CAIRO 8384

1. YOU SHOULD INFORM SADAT THAT WE ARE ALREADY DEEP IN URGENT DISCUSSION WITH ISRAELIS ON NEED FOR THEIR EARLY WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON. ISRAELIS HAVE TOLD US IN FIRMEST TERMS THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO STAY IN LEBANESE TERRITORY BUT THEY ARE ASKING FOR CREDIBLE ARRANGEMENTS TO ASSURE BEFORE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL THAT PLO DOES NOT RE-
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ENTER BUFFER ZONE. WE ARE GIVING HIGH PRIORITY TO OBJECTIVE OF GETTING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND TRUST SADAT WILL UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT WE SAY PUBLICLY AT THIS TIME MUST BE CALCULATED TO SERVE THAT PURPOSE.

2. ISRAELIS APPEAR TO HAVE ACHIEVED LIMITED OBJECTIVE OF FORCING PLO WITHDRAWAL FROM ZONE EXTENDING ABOUT EIGHT

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KILOMETERS FROM BORDER AND HAVE INFORMED US THAT
OPERATION IS COMPLETED. OUR CONCERN, HOWEVER, IS THAT
PROTRACTED ISRAELI STAY IN SOUTH LEBANON WILL COMPLICATE
FURTHER PROGRESS IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND THUS PLAY INTO
HANDS OF PLO AND REJECTIONISTS. WE ARE POINTING THIS OUT

TO THEM.

3. WE ARE CONSIDERING NOW POSSIBILITY OF SEEKING IN UNSC
A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND INSERTION
OF PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN THE SOUTH TO STABILIZE SITUATION.
OUR THINKING ON THIS SHOULD BE HELD IN CLOSEST CONFIDENCE
UNTIL WE HAVE HAD CHANCE TO EXPLORE MORE FULLY BEST MEANS
OF GETTING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND STABILIZED SITUATION IN
SOUTH LEBANON. WE EXPECT UNSC TO BEGIN MEETING THURSDAY
OR FRIDAY. WE WILL WANT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH AMBASSADOR
MEGUID IN NEW YORK.

4. THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY ARE PERSONALLY GIVING
FULLEST ATTENTION TO PROBLEM AND WHAT CAN BE DONE,
APPRECIATING DIFFICULTUES IT POSES FOR SADAT AND FOR
PEACE PROCESS. WE WILL WANT TO STAY IN CLOSEST CONSULTA-
TION WITH SADAT AND WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE HIS OWN
ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION. OUR PRESENT READING IS THAT
ISRAELIS ALSO APPRECIATE NEED TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM IN
CONTEXT OF THEIR INTEREST IN PEACE PROCESS AND THAT THIS
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IS DEFINITE FACTOR IN THEIR THINKING.

5. WE WILL HOPE TO HAVE SOMETHING FURTHER FOR SADAT IN
NEXT SEVERAL DAYS AS IT BECOMES CLEARER WHAT IS BEST
COURSE OF ACTION TO BRING EARLY END TO SITUATION. IN THE
MEANTIME, WE HOPE HE WILL DO WHAT HE CAN TO LIMIT DAMAGE
FROM THE SITUATION. WE ASSUME SADAT SHARES OUR ASSESSMENT
THAT, DESPITE CURRENT FOCUS ON THIS ISSUE, WE SHOULD NOT
LET THIS SITUATION DISTRACT FROM NEED TO CONTINUE MAJOR
EFFORTS TO MAKE EARLY PROGRESS ON PEACE FRONT.
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